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Washington, DC - This week, Senator Ken Salazar (D-CO), Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO), Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) introduced companion legislation to Representatives Tom Petri (R-WI) and Doris Matsui's (D-CA) Troops to Teachers Improvement Act. Both bills, H.R. 711 in the House and S. 769 in the Senate, would allow more schools across the nation to benefit from the Troops to Teachers program, which assists retiring military personnel start second careers as school teachers.

"At a time when seven percent of the nation's teaching force leaves every year and there is an overwhelming need for highly-qualified Science and Math teachers, expanding the Troops to Teachers program has never been more important," said Matsui. "I look forward to working with Congressman Petri and the Senate sponsors to move this legislation as quickly as possible so that veterans who have proven their commitment to our country are offered the opportunity to continue to serve their country and future generations."

Troops to Teachers is a unique program that provides stipends to retiring military personnel to teach in school districts with large low-income populations and a shortage of teachers in math and science. Since its authorization in 1993, nearly 10,000 veterans have participated in the program - bringing important math, science, and foreign language expertise to our classrooms.

Unfortunately, because of a drafting error in the No Child Left Behind Act, the Department of Education restricted the number of school districts in which veterans can fulfill their teaching requirement and receive the stipend. The Petri-Matsui legislation would correct that error and expand the program so that if no high-need school exists within 50 miles of a veteran's home, veterans would be eligible to fulfill their obligations in schools that serve low-income students under the original definition of high-need.

The Troops to Teachers Improvement Act represents a compromise between Congress' original intent and the Education Department's interpretation.

"I am very pleased that our Troops to Teachers Improvement Act is not only bipartisan, it is now bicameral," said Petri. "Senators Salazar, Allard, Chambliss, and Collins understand what a beneficial program Troops to Teachers is for both students and for teacher participants. I look forward to working with Rep. Matsui and our Senate colleagues to advance this legislation in the 110th Congress."

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